

Transportation

Management Intent

The primary management intent for the transportation corridors is to retain them in public ownership and utilize them to provide access both through the unit (the primary corridors) and to the agricultural and settlement areas within the planning area (the secondary corridors). Where these corridors replace existing trails, trail uses will occur in the corridor.

Classification

Following preliminary engineering and design work that locates the corridors precisely, those traversing state lands will be reclassified as Transportation Corridors. This specific reclassification will not require an amendment to this plan unless the alignment is significantly changed. In the interim, the corridors will be included in the classification of the adjacent lands (generally either Agricultural Lands or Wildlife Habitat/Water Resources Lands; where the corridors go between these classifications, they will be classified Agricultural Lands).

Planned Actions

Primary roads. Two primary road corridors will be located within the unit (See Master Plan, page 47). These are an east-west corridor, part of the Chuitna River/Goose Bay corridor, and a north-south corridor, part of a corridor between Point MacKenzie and Willow. ,

Partial construction of a road in the Chuitna River/Goose Bay Corridor (ADL 57588) has already occurred at Point MacKenzie. Should the state decide to build a road from Point MacKenzie to lands west of the Susitna River, including the Beluga coal fields, this corridor would provide the shortest, most cost-effective overland route. The width will be 400 feet in order to allow for alteration in alignment during engineering of this corridor and eventual inclusion of frontage roads and utility line corridors. Following final road engineering studies, the 400 foot total width may be reduced, with DOT/PF concurrence.

There is an existing right-of-way reservation (ADL 57588) for an east-west corridor south of the alignment identified in this plan. After preliminary engineering studies determine the exact alignment, the Department of Transportation will relinquish the reservation provided that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough reserves the right-of-way shown in this plan at no cost to the state.

The Point MacKenzie - Willow corridor has been evaluated by DOT as an option for access between Point MacKenzie and the Parks Highway at Willow as part of the Knik crossing study. At the present time DOT believes a corridor to Houston to be preferable as the north approach to the Knik crossing because of lower initial cost. Nevertheless, it is expected that eventually there will be a major north-south road through the Fish Creek area connecting Point MacKenzie and Willow. A portion of the right-of-way for the north-south corridor through the Fish Creek project has already been applied for (ADL 216410). The total width of this corridor will be 400 feet. This width will allow for a frontage road system and utility lines.

Two alternative locations for the north/south corridor within the Fish Creek study area were considered:

- 1) along the western toe slopes of Moraine Ridge; and
- 2) west of Moraine Ridge through the agricultural area.

The corridor along the western toe slopes of Moraine Ridge was selected by the Department of Natural Resources and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough as the preferred alternative following public and interagency review. This alternative is preferable because it is more compatible with the intended land uses. It allows for a better farm layout with 55 tracts instead of 59. Several of the tracts are larger. Also a road at the base of Moraine Ridge separates agricultural uses on the west from residential uses on the east. It will provide faster access from the Anchorage and Point MacKenzie areas to what will eventually be the most heavily settled part of the study area, the southern end of Moraine Ridge. (This will be especially true if the Knik crossing is built.) It will put the intersection of the main north-south and east-west roads at the south end of Moraine Ridge where commercial development is intended to occur. (It should be noted that the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities prefers the alternate corridor shown in the Appendix.)

Preliminary cost estimates by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Public Works Department indicated that there was not a significant difference in the cost of the two alternatives (see appendix). Therefore cost was not a factor in the selection of the Moraine Ridge corridor.

At the time this plan was developed, not enough information was available to determine the exact alignment of the north-south road within the Moraine Ridge corridor. (Because the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities analyzed the alternate corridor as part of the Knik Crossing study, better information is available for that route.) The additional information needed about the selected corridor is most likely to be obtained through a preliminary engineering study. A revision in the alignment may necessitate a minor revision in the tract layout. Based on the additional information provided by a preliminary engineering study, the borough and the state should again compare the two alternative corridors. If, based on better information, it is determined that the Moraine Ridge route is substantially more expensive than the alternate route, or that is not suitable for an arterial highway, the alternate corridor should be reconsidered. (See guideline #8 below.)

The right-of-way application ADL 216410 is for the alternate corridor shown in the Appendix. This will be held in pending status by the Department of Natural Resources until after the steps outlined above are taken and the route decision is final.

Secondary roads. A secondary, or local, road system is needed to provide access from the primary roads to farm tracts. Alignment of secondary roads will generally follow the corridors identified in this plan.

These corridors were identified through site design workshops and represent the least amount of overall construction cost and environmental impacts (e.g., anadromous fish stream crossings), while accessing the greatest amount of area. All secondary road corridors will be 100 feet wide which conforms to state and borough standards for secondary roads.

Initial access. There are several options for providing initial access to the project. These are summarized in table on page 92 in Chapter Four, Implementation. The two main options are from the south, via a 4.7 mile road from Point MacKenzie that requires crossing the Little Susitna River, or from the north via the Long Lake Road or Nancy Lake Road. The decision on which option to select for initial construction will be made during implementation, based on the amount of available funding. However, this plan recommends that initial access be constructed from the south, despite its greater initial cost. Access from the south will connect the Fish Creek and Point MacKenzie agricultural areas, will provide shorter access to the Wasilla and Anchorage areas for future residents of the Moraine Ridge area, will provide improved access to the Little Susitna River for Anchorage and Valley residents for recreational use, and will provide shorter access to fishing opportunities afforded by Fish Creek for Anchorage and Valley residents. This is particularly true for Anchorage residents if the Knik Crossing is constructed. It is 32 1/2 miles from Wasilla to the south project boundary via the south access and 35 1/2 to 39 1/4 miles (depending on which north access is used) from Wasilla to the north project boundary.

Responsibility for Road Construction. If the initial purpose for roads in the Fish Creek area is as farm roads, this plan assumes that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will construct the roads upon receipt of funding from the Legislature.

The borough will build the initial roads to minimum standards to provide access to the farm tracts. The width of the corridors and the initial construction of the roads will allow for eventual upgrading to state standards. At such time as the roads in the primary corridors are needed as arterial highways, it is expected that the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities will assume responsibility for them.

The intent is that initial construction should be the responsibility of whichever agency can do it most quickly and inexpensively.

Railroad. If the Point MacKenzie area develops into an industrial complex with a port site, a railroad connection between Point MacKenzie and the interior or the Beluga area may be needed. A railroad corridor across Moraine Ridge was recommended in a reconnaissance study prepared by a private firm for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough on the feasibility of an Alaska Railroad

extension to Point MacKenzie. A separate evaluation done as part of this plan determined that a better route for a railroad may be a route west of Moraine Ridge, paralleling the alternate north-south road corridor, because of better soils and fewer grade problems. DOT/PF objects to placing a railroad and a highway in the same corridor because of problems with intersections. No corridor is reserved for a railroad in this plan because it would delete additional land from the agricultural tracts, because the likelihood of a railroad through this unit is speculative at present, and because there is insufficient data to determine the best route. Therefore, attempting to locate a right-of-way at this time would be of little value. If at some time after the sale of agricultural tracts it is decided that the railroad should go through this area, condemnation of some parts of some agricultural parcels may be necessary.

Access to the Susitna Corridor. Access to the Susitna Corridor will be possible from the road in Section 36, Township 17 North, Range 7 West; from the road in Section 29, Township 17 North, Range 6 West; from an extension of the road in Section 23, Township 17 North, Range 6 West; from the road in Section 6, Township 17 North, Range 5 West; and from Section 29, Township 18 North, Range 5 West. The phase 3 roads shown at these locations on the Master Plan will not necessarily be built, but the option will be available. Some of these corridors may be suitable only for winter access.

Management Guidelines












1. Farming of right-of-way corridors. See Agriculture Section, guideline 3, page 51.
2. The requirement (11 AAC 53.450) for retention of a 300 foot wide buffer strip along highways through state lands is waived through the Fish Creek planning area where roads pass through farm tracts because:
 - a) the width of the corridors is adequate to allow for such uses as utility lines and trails;
 - b) agricultural uses are low intensity and do not need to be screened from the view of highway users;
 - c) buffers would result in eliminating a considerable amount of acreage from agricultural production; and
 - d) allowing agricultural use to the edge of the corridor will open up views of Denali and Mt. Susitna.
3. Alignment of road corridors should allow for minimum, long-run financial costs, including all construction, operations, and maintenance costs.
4. Impact on the aquatic, terrestrial, aesthetic, and cultural features of the environment should be as minimal as possible.
5. Timber salvage on right-of-ways: see guideline 12, Forestry Section, page 58.

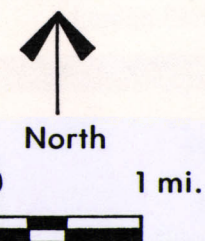
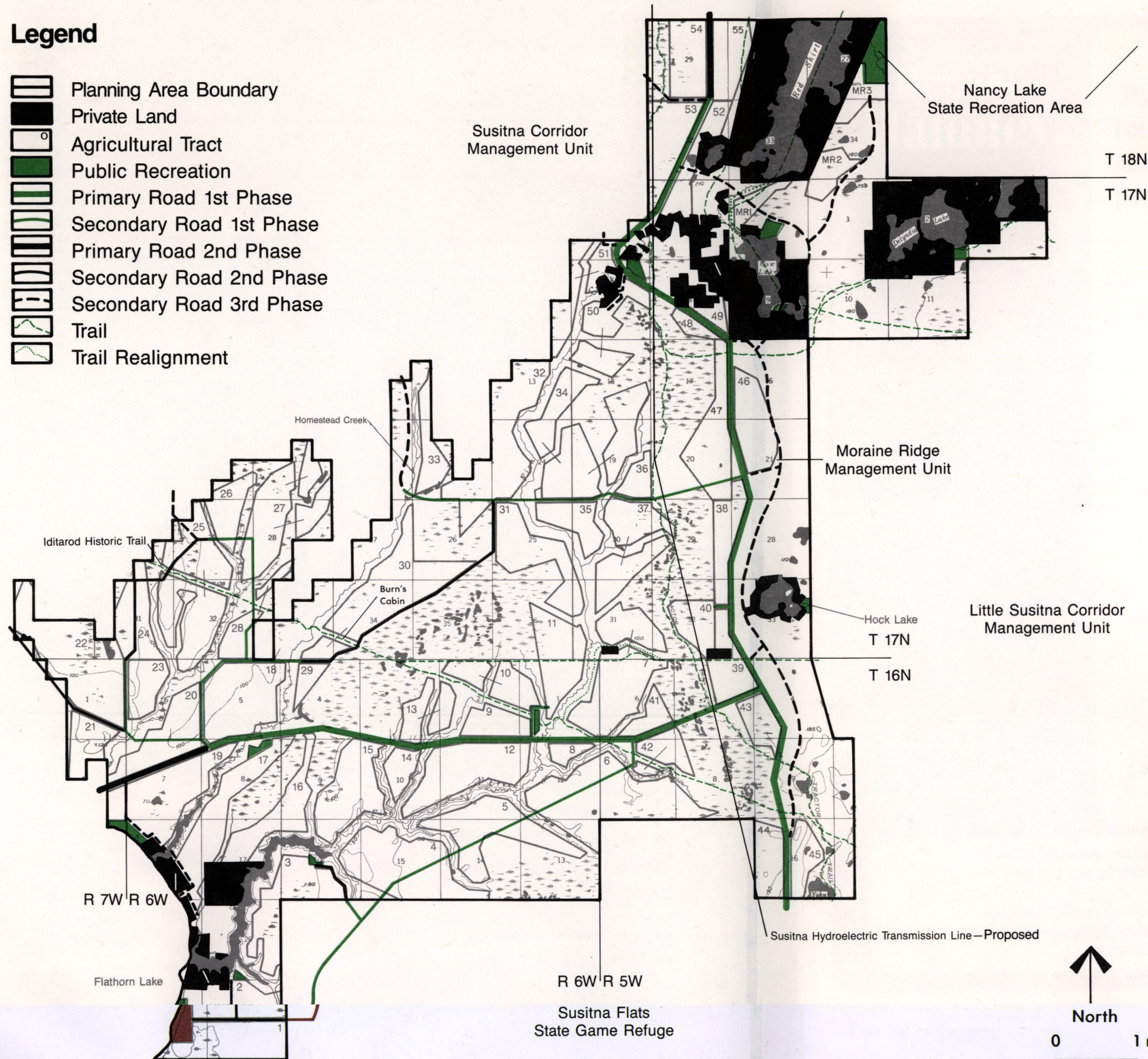
6. If engineering studies determine that the Beluga corridor identified in this plan is feasible, the state will relinquish the existing right-of-way reservation to the south, and the borough will reserve a right-of-way through borough lands along the alignment shown in this plan at no cost to the state. These actions will occur simultaneously.
7. First generation road construction on all roads will be built to the minimum standards listed below. (These are standards acceptable to Matanuska-Susitna Borough for resource development roads;
 - 24 foot surface (includes shoulders)
 - minimum of two feet of stable compacted gravel or other competent fill material;
 - vee ditches;
 - culverts or bridges as needed for cross drainage to maintain existing drainage patterns;
 - maximum of 10 percent grade;
 - 2:1 side slope on cut/fill surfaces;
 - roadside revegetation if necessary for soil stabilization, according to the Department of Transportation's 1981 Standard Specifications for Highway Construction.
8. A preliminary engineering study of the north-south route should be done as the first step in development of this area. Following this study, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Transportation/Public Facilities should again compare the two alternative north-south corridors. If the new information indicates that the alternate corridor is significantly better, an amendment of this plan should be requested. Public comment must be obtained before a final decision to change the location of the north-south corridor is made. If during the preliminary engineering study it is determined that the Moraine Ridge corridor is feasible, the alignment may be changed as necessary, provided that the general concept of the road as the boundary between the agricultural tracts and the settlement lands is adhered to and that the road's encroachment on class II and III soils is kept to a minimum.
9. The preferred route for the secondary road to the south end of Flathorn Lake is through the Susitna Flats Game Refuge, pending approval from the Department of Fish and Game at the time funding is available for preliminary engineering studies. The Department of Fish and Game should consult concerned interest groups in making this decision. The soils are better for road construction in the Refuge and a road there would improve access to the Refuge. The alternate route along the section lines (and project boundary) will be used if the Department of Fish and Game does not approve the route through the Susitna Flats Game Refuge.

10. The road system shown on the Master Plan may be constructed in phases in order to keep initial development costs as low as possible. See Road Phases map, page 77. Phase 1 includes only those roads necessary to provide access to all farm tracts, excluding three at the north end of Moraine Ridge (see Settlement section, page 64.) Phase 2 includes those roads necessary to complete an internal circulation system within the farming area and to provide access to the Susitna River and recreation sites on Flathorn Lake and Fish Creek. Phase 3 includes the roads on Moraine Ridge that will provide access to settlement areas, recreation areas on the lakes on the ridge, and the three agricultural tracts at the north end of the ridge; roads that provide access to existing private lands on Moraine Ridge and around Flathorn Lake; and roads that provide access to Susitna Corridor. The Moraine Ridge road system will be designed in greater detail as part of the Moraine Ridge general development plan.
11. Access to existing private land: see Chapter 3, Agricultural Section, guideline 11, page 53, and Settlement Section, guideline 1(d).
12. A 100-foot-wide corridor will be reserved in public ownership for all phase 2 roads and phase 3 roads that provide access to the Susitna corridor and the road across tract 52. Other phase 3 roads that provide access to existing private parcels near Redshirt and Flathorn Lakes and Fish Creek will be reserved by an easement through the agricultural tracts. (See also agricultural guidelines #3 and 11, pages 51 and 53, respectively.)
13. The bridge across the Fish Creek tributary between Sections 6 and 7, Township 16 North, Range 5 West should be wide and high enough to allow the Iditarod Trail to cross under the road at this point. The Iditarod Trail Committee should be consulted during the design of the crossings of major roads and the Iditarod Trail. Where possible, above grade crossings should be used rather than culverts.
14. All material sites for road construction and maintenance should be located a sufficient distance from the road so as to reduce adverse visual impacts to a minimum. 300 feet from the edge of the right of way should be the minimum distance.
15. If the selected corridor for the proposed Susitna Hydroelectric transmission line runs through the Fish Creek area, the location as shown on the Road Phases Map, page 77, is generally acceptable, because it would have the least impact on agricultural soils and probably lower visual impacts. However, this location should be reevaluated during the permitting process based on an on-the-ground evaluation; more detailed information available at that time, and public comment. Visual impact should be further evaluated at that time to determine whether the power line would be visible from the north-south road to the east and whether it would detract from the views of the mountain to the west. If feasible, the transmission line should be routed around tracts 37, 40 and 44.

16. Wherever possible electric power lines to this area should be placed in the road rights-of-way. In determining which side of the road to put the lines on, impact on the view of road users must be considered. In addition, section line easements will be available for power lines. Where additional easements are necessary they will be identified at the time of survey. Section line easements will be considered a secondary system to be utilized only if road corridors will not provide a reasonable route for power or other utility distribution lines.
17. Prior to constructing a road across the Little Susitna River, the project should be coordinated with the Department of Fish and Game and Division of Parks to provide for adequate management of the resulting increase in use of the Little Susitna River.

Legend

-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Private Land
-  Agricultural Tract
-  Public Recreation
-  Primary Road 1st Phase
-  Secondary Road 1st Phase
-  Primary Road 2nd Phase
-  Secondary Road 2nd Phase
-  Secondary Road 3rd Phase
-  Trail
-  Trail Realignment



FISH CREEK Management Plan

Road Phases